

Initial introduction:

Kay and I are going to share with you the briefest of an introduction to some aspects of Clare's way of contemplation. We are only in the early stages of this contemplative practice and have so much more to learn...

Resources materials used for my presentation:

Franciscan Prayer

by Ilia Delio OSF

Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi

by Sister Frances Teresa OSC

St Clare of Assisi's Third letter to Agnes of Prague

Clare of Assisi's image of Christ the Mirror

It was in the early part of 2014 when an interview of Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio found its way to me. I had to know more so I read her book, *Franciscan Prayer*. On page 2 it became a page-turner and on page 12, a homecoming for on that page she wrote:

“one must come to know who one is before God, one's strengths and weaknesses, gifts and failings, in order that one may be transformed into a vessel of compassionate love and come to see the world with new and deeper vision.”

Wow! I knew my failings only too well and my strengths and gifts to a lesser degree and yet I didn't remember any of them in the context of “knowing who I (sic) am before God.” This is not a head-knowing; rather a heart-knowing. A **necessary thing** if we are to be transformed into an instrument of God's love, compassion, healing.. bringing the Gospel to life and life to the Gospel.

It was Francis who showed Clare how to pray and it was Clare who then provided a “roadmap for the Franciscan evangelical life’ as detailed in her four letters to Agnes of Prague.

Clare’s letters revealed her relationship to Christ in the images she used throughout her four letters: Christ the Liberator, Christ the King, Christ the Light, Christ the suffering Lover and **Christ the Mirror**.

The image of Christ the Mirror was original to St Clare of Assisi for up to this point the image of mirror was used only within the context as the mirror of the soul.

Clare suggested to Agnes that Christ is like a huge mirror hung beside the road. This mirror hung on the wood of the cross, and urged all those who passed by to consider what they saw, saying, “All you who pass by the way, look and see if there be any sorrows like my sorrow.”

Only in the mirror of the cross do we truly see who we are and what we are called to be by becoming transformed into the image of Christ.

To gaze into this mirror and see the Crucified Christ changes everything. For Clare it is the path of union with God centered on the mystery of Christ crucified through contemplation. . She instructs Agnes to **gaze** into the Mirror of the Crucified Christ, to **consider** the Passion of Christ and the pain of the world, to **contemplate** what she considers and then to **imitate** Christ.

For Clare and for Francis our task is to bear Christ for the now. To live in the presence of Christ **now - In this world**. To become an icon of Christ in this world. We are changed or as Francis said “Sanctify yourself and society is sanctified.”

Sister Frances Teresa OSC tells us in her book, *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi*, that Clare tells Agnes there is a second **necessary thing**:

... “to look into this mirror every day, and continually ponder on your own face, so that you may adorn your whole being, within and without, in robes of wonderful variety.”

We need to look in the mirror every day to see in our mirror image a work of God; someone adorned by grace; the face of one loved, redeemed and made beautiful by God as well as someone in whom this work is not yet complete.

I close this presentation with Clare’s words to Agnes in Letter 3. 12-14:

"Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance!
And transform your entire being into the image
of the Godhead Itself through contemplation.
So that you too may feel what His friends feel
as they taste the hidden sweetness
that God Himself has reserved from the beginning
for those who love Him" (3LAg 12-14).

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